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Abe Lincoln In New Harmony

By James Hooe



Current controversy over William Manchester's Book "The Death of a President," is perpetually paralleled with every new book published on Abraham Lincoln. More than five hundred have been published; yet many myths and historical distortions persist.

Almost every writer of recent times has expressed a desire to write on Lincoln, while the most popular contemporary work is Carl Sandburg's poetic prose which is praised by Robert E. Sherwood as "monumental" and criticized by Edmund Wilson who states, "There are moments when one is tempted to feel that the cruelest thing that has happened to Lincoln since he was shot by Booth was to fall into the hands of Carl Sandburg."

Since American writers walk where angels fear to tread, this writer, through association with the Lincoln Heritage Trail Foundation as a public relations consultant, in the insatiable quest for new details on Lincoln's life, has re-examined his early formative years in Indiana.

In a forth-coming book, "The Hoosier Lincoln, new research has shown a plausible reason why Lincoln left Indiana at the age of twenty-one better educated than his tutored contemporaries elsewhere and a reappraisal of his father, Thomas Lincoln, which brings a new interpretation of what Lincoln was really like.

Abraham Lincoln is the one historical person most of us would like to know, for as the common man reads of him he can read into Lincoln something of himself. This self-identification of the American people with the sixteenth President has left an indelible imprint on every succeeding generation that has

influenced the shaping of the destiny of our nation in the past and, presumably, for the ages.

Lincoln's uncanny understanding of how to communicate with the masses and his unique use of applied psychology in holding a nation together can be illustrated in his appeal for Americans to: "Let reverence for the laws become the political religion of the nation," which is especially applicable today and as timely as President Johnson's rent State of the Union message.

Although Lincoln has been portrayed in more books than any other American, no two writers seem to agree on their assessments of the personality traits combined in the complex man, Lincoln, which has created a contradictory and sometimes controversial image of him.

Lincoln himself left an impressive amount of published words estimated to out number the complete works of Shakespeare and all the words of the Bible. While revealing some aspects of his inner-self in his writing, his own record of his life is far from complete. His important formative years from age seven to twenty one in Indiana, he summed up with the sentence: "There I grew up."

This has led many biographers to conclude he was ashamed and wished to "cover up" his humble youth in the State of Indiana, which is strangely paralleled with his own life. Lincoln was born in 1809, the year Indiana became a separate territory, and his family moved to Indiana the very month of the same year Indiana attained statehood in December 1816.

This biographical oversight is probably due to Lincoln's own lifelong reticence to discuss his loved one or his other sensitive inner feelings, a character trait common among the Hoosier frontiers people of his environment. His melancholic memories of his mother, who died when he was nine, were summed up years later when as President he referred to her as his "Angel mother."

Her grave in Indiana, long neglected, now is a National

Memorial and a middle point of the three state Lincoln Heritage Trail which begins at his birth place at Hodgenville, Kentucky and extends to his tomb at Springfield, Illinois.

More important in the molding of Lincoln's character and educational development was his father, Thomas Lincoln, who unfortunately, cost biographers have ignored, or worse, written off as unimportant or an undesirable relative.

The congenial filial relationship between the father, Tom, and his only son, Abe during the fourteen years in the isolated area of the Indiana frontier cannot be over emphasized in the effect on the boy's future character.

Lincoln's paternal pride and affection for his own four sons were a reflection on his own father's relationship to him — as Tom Lincoln for a time had to serve as both father and mother to the young boy of nine who was left saddened at his "Angel mother's" untimely death.

Records show Thomas Lincoln was well liked, and liked his Kentucky home. Some of his friends followed his leadership and followed him to Indiana. It was a sacrifice to give up his contacts and resettle in a new land. He had a reputation for paying his debts, working hard and being a good provider. Like George Washington he served his country as a road surveyor, served on juries, and was trusted in appraising an estate; but he was leery of Kentucky land titles, so even though the tax book listed him as 15th among the 98 property owners named, he sold out at a loss to raise his only son in a different environment from his own youth.

Tom was both an industrious and religious man. As a single man he had worked as a Kentucky "patroller" who seized Negro slaves roving without permission. Later he took a raft of merchandise down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans, where he saw the selling of slaves on the famous slave market — an experience he later encouraged his son to duplicate.

See Other Side →

MORE ABOUT

Lincoln In New Harmony

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Tom Lincoln was one of the few outspoken anti-slavery men in Hardin County, Kentucky, which in 1816 had 1,238 slaves on its tax list. He affiliated himself with the splintered Separate-Baptist congregation which was anti-slavery in sentiment. This is why Tom chose to risk all and move out of the slave area into the new State of Indiana to prove the proper environment for the formative years of his prized son, named for his father who was an intimate friend of Daniel Boone.

The underscore the prime importance of the father's decision and sacrifice on not only his son's future but the future of the United States (or the Union of States as it was referred to in those days) we should not overlook the ironic fact that only eighty miles away from Tom's Knob Creek farm and only one year before Abe's birth, another backwoods Kentucky family by the name of Davis also had a son they named Jefferson.

Young Abe was proud of his father, Tom Lincoln. He was a muscular man and was known as the "best man" in his community of Gentryville, Indiana. He was also a handsome man with coarse black hair and dark grey eyes (he lost one eye by accident). He had a pleasant personality and was a master at telling humorous stories, a talent his son acquired. An outdoor man, he loved hunting and fishing. He was a man of exceptionally good morals, no vices, was honest and a good farmer, carpenter and cabinet-maker. Abe's admiration and respect for his father's wisdom and authority and his dutiful loyalty to him can best be displayed by his lifelong respect and regard for the authority of law as expressed in a Springfield, Illinois address on January 27, 1838. There he said: Let every man remember that to violate the law is to trample

on the blood of his father — and his own children's liberty."

From this speech, given years later, it is apparent that Tom's early teaching of his own set of social values and his almost religious attitude of respect for the country's laws were a guiding factor and influence in the young man's eventual study of the law.

This early legal influence started when Tom first took his then six year old son along on a trip to Elizabethtown, Kentucky, shortly before moving to Indiana, to straighten out an entanglement on his Knob Creek land title.

The father also encouraged his teenage son to attend court trials in the county seat in Boonville, Indiana, and to read law from books borrowed from a family friend in Rockport. In later years Abe seemed to correlate his respect for his father's authority with his respect for the law.

Lincoln's educational development in his Hoosier environment has mystified such biographers as Carl Sandburg who realized it is not plausible that he absorbed his early knowledge from the forest, or from limited reading assigned to him by historians. Recent research has thrown further light on his early education. Tom Lincoln, his father, who had the best set of carpenter's tools, and was the "best regarded carpenter and cabinetmaker" in southern Indiana" was sought out first by George Rapp, founder of the Harmonie Colonie. Still later, in 1825 he became associated with Robert Owen, a wealthy English industrialist who bought the settlement and brought his "boatload of knowledge" from Europe to the Hoosier frontier, which became a seat of culture with the slogan "Universal happiness through universal education."

Abe not only assisted his father in carpentry work, but got his versatile education there at the first trade school, and first free public library in America, under the tutoring of such men as William MacClure, father of American geology, and the naturalist Thomas Say.

The young Abraham Lincoln received his education and intellectual achievements under the guidance of Robert Owens' assembly of scientists, educators and intellectuals in his "Athens in the Wilderness." In his enthusiasm to promote his son's education Tom Lincoln, on April 5, 1827, purchased 80 acres of land in Posey County, Indiana, about 10 miles south of Harmonie, and hoped to re-settle near where Robert Owens planned to build a University in the wilderness.

In one of his most trying moments as President, Lincoln was to call upon his boyhood teacher and friend in New Harmony, Robert Dale Owen, son of the founder, who had written him in September, 1862 urging him to issue immediately an Emancipation Proclamation to

free the slaves. Owens wrote, "Property in man, always morally unjust, has become nationally dangerous. Property that endangers the safety of the nation should not be suffered to remain in the hands of its citizens." Relying on his past close friendship and teaching influence on the President, Owen continued, "A chief magistrate who permits it to so remain becomes responsible for the consequences."

This critical letter from his old teacher in New Harmony had such an effect on the President that according to Secretary Chase, "It had more effect in deciding the President to make his proclamation than all other communication combined."

Lincoln was trying to work out a proclamation of Amnesty, a worrisome problem to him. Mr. Owen went to work on the document and presented it to Lincoln. In it he made reference to the Whiskey Rebellion during the administration of Washington, who he knew to be Lincoln's boyhood hero. Excitedly, the President asked: "Did Washington issue a proclamation of amnesty?" Owen, making his point, replied, "Here it is, Sir!"

On December 8, 1863 the President issued his Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction. Acknowledging his former Hoosier schoolteacher's influence, he told him, "Mr. Owen, you have conferred a very essential service both upon me and the country." The New Harmony influence in Lincoln's formative years cannot be over emphasized in his father attitudes on the evils of slavery and his outstanding belief that everyone should have an equal opportunity at education and the pursuit of happiness.

Equal to the inspirational educational opportunity in his southern Indiana home, hereditary evidence shows he was born with superior endowment from his father and grandfather, both of whom showed an intelligent and inquisitive mind and superior physical strength which were passed on to Abe, giving him his physical and mental development and unique trait for understanding people and his personality to communicate with them.

The News
tuesday
portfolio

world
of
travel



The "Roofless Church," a modern shrine, is the most striking building at New Harmony, where two quite different groups lived the life communal.

Rugged individualism and a dual commune

Two faces of Indiana: Lincoln Land and New Harmony

By JOHN F. McLEOD

FRENCH LICK, Ind.—Abraham Lincoln once composed a verse about the Little Pigeon River farm in Indiana on which he lived with his family:

When first my father settled here
'Twas then the frontier line.
The panther's scream filled the night with fear
And bears preyed on the swine

The land, in fact, was such a wilderness, that Thomas Lincoln had to cut his own road thru underbrush for much of the way. Abe was only 7 and hardly the mighty axeman he became before the family picked up stakes 14 years later and moved over into Illinois.

You think of this today as you drive thru rolling, still rather wooded countryside, following the Lincoln Heritage Trail as it crosses the Ohio River from Kentucky to another river, the Wabash, and thence over it into Illinois.

Hoosiers, which is what we natives of Indiana some-

times call ourselves, like to boast that Lincoln spent his really formative years in Indiana.

The key Indiana stop is at the Lincoln National Boyhood National Memorial near Lincoln City, Ind. This contains a handsome Visitor Center with exhibits telling the story of the Lincolns' life here. Nearby is the grave of Nancy Hanks Lincoln, who died of "milk sickness" when Abe was only 9. A trail then leads you to the Lincoln Living Historical Farm, which contains a reproduction of the tiny Lincoln Log Cabin with outhouses, fences and crops much as they must have been in young Abe's time. The same sort of crops—tobacco, corn, pumpkins, flax—are planted now as then. National Park Service employees cultivate the crops with horse-drawn equipment.

On our visit an actual cousin (six times removed), Forrest Lincoln, was in the cabin with his wife, Mary, to receive us. Mary, a Park Service employee, brewed some sassafras tea, a Hoosier specialty, made from the roots of a small tree. Mr. Lincoln, who bears a remarkable resemblance, except in height, to the Civil War president, wore a stovepipe hat. Mr. Lincoln is clerk of Spencer County Court in nearby Rockport, and one of his distinc-

tions is "I happen to be the only Republican in the courthouse!"

THERE are camping and picnic facilities at nearby Lincoln State Park, and there's a nearby commercial tourist attraction, Santa Claus Village, where you can have a snack. Main attraction of this Santa Claus Land is Jim Yellig, by far the most authentic Santa Claus I've ever met, complete with "belly like a bowlful of jelly" and booming laugh. He's been living his role for 41 years. (Your youngsters may have a picture taken with him—one for \$1.95, three for \$4.90, a booming business, year-around.)

We made two overnight stops in the state—one at a Holiday Inn in Jasper, a German community; the other at the traditional spa resort of French Lick, perhaps the outstanding resort in Indiana. When I was a youth living in southern Indiana a bit north of Lincoln country, we would drive to Jasper because it was the liveliest town around. The Germans of Jasper didn't let a little thing like prohibition stop them from brewing an excellent beer. These days, however, the good burghers of Jasper prefer that tourists concentrate on visiting their beautiful big St. Joseph's Church, 40 years abuilding, and the nearby St. Meinrad Archabbey, a Benedictine establishment said to be the second largest of U.S. seminaries.

French Lick and the nearby spa of West Baden reached their peak hey-days a generation ago, when spas were more in style, and wide-open gambling casinos were winked at. The two resort towns were winter headquarters for circuses, and boxers came here for their retinues for training. There were special railway spurs to bring in the private cars of millionaire patrons. Both spas were especially popular in the weeks just before and after the Kentucky Derby, with Louisville little more than an hour's drive away.

West Baden Springs Hotel, with a truly spectacularly domed lobby long preceding Atlanta's Regency Hyatt House, is now a college. The French Lick Hotel was taken over by the Sheraton and is mostly a convention center, especially popular with golfers because of its two championship courses.

TWO years before those rugged pioneers, the Lincolns, cut their own trail into southern Indiana, a quite different type of settler arrived in the area by river barge from Pennsylvania. They were Germans, followers of George Rapp, who believed in the imminent second coming of Christ and also in a communal life style. In 10 years they built up a thriving community.

After building the communal dwellings and establishing a flourishing agriculture and handicraft economy, however, George Rapp sold out the whole commune, lock, stock

(Continued on page 22)



Cabin at the Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial is much like that in which young Abe lived.



Visitor enjoys sassafras tea with Forrest Lincoln (right), a sixth cousin of the President.

portfolio

Two faces of Indiana

(Continued from page 21)

and many a barrel. It was said he decided to leave the area because his followers had too little to do once they were established. They had too much time to mull over his strange religious doctrines, which included celibacy.

The commune's purchaser was a quite different gentleman. He believed in the communal way of life, too, but his religion was science. This was Robert Owen, a Welsh industrialist, philanthropist and social reformer. He attracted scores of similarly inclined colonists — teachers, artists, scientists, philosophizers. The community lasted only a few years but its remarkable accomplishments include: America's first kindergarten, first women's club, first trade school and first civil drama club. Here also was the site of America's first geological survey.

It was all quite wonderful for a time. But, like so many other Utopias, this, too, came to an end. Too many of the high thinkers weren't very hard workers.

New Harmony, only 25 miles from Evansville, is a pleasant side stop along the Lincoln Trail. Its golden rain trees, planted by the Owenites, are particularly lovely when in bloom in June. A good lunch stop is the Red Geranium Restaurant, famed locally for its baked goods.

A dramatic new shrine, called the Roofless Church was built within recent years by Mrs. James Blaffer Owen, wife of a great-grandson of the Owen leader. Containing a modern sculpture by Jaco Lipchitz, many think it alone is worth the trip. Paul Tillich, the theologian, was so enamored of the place that he asked that his ashes be scattered here on his death. They were, and the site, a pine grove, is now Paul Tillich Park.



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